

April 11, 2019

Dear Legislators,

We are committed to improving transportation access for all of Seattle's residents - including safe pedestrian crosswalk access. The recent closure of the Alaskan Way Viaduct and the change it brought to commuting habits and choices is significant to Seattle – more people are choosing to commute in other modes than their personal vehicles. As a result, we want to improve the movement of buses and provide safer pedestrian access through the use of automated traffic enforcement cameras.

When a vehicle fails to properly clear an intersection, blocking cross traffic, it creates significant mobility and public safety issues. Blocking the box increases congestion, reduces the speed and reliability of transit, and negatively impacts emergency response time by blocking fire and safety vehicles. Currently, these violations can only be enforced by a police officer who witnesses the incident, but there are several challenges and drawbacks to manual enforcement. Manual enforcement is resource intensive and further disrupts traffic, creating additional congestion.

As Seattle faces new transportation and traffic challenges, our streets need be able to get people around our city and region efficiently and safely. Automated enforcement would help Seattle to better address public safety and congestion issues by adding block the box and transit only lanes to the list of violations that can be enforced by automated cameras.

This legislation would not only aid in the management of traffic in local jurisdictions that struggle with increasing congestion, but would create longer-lasting behavior change through consistent enforcement, would free up resources to assist in the many other public safety needs that arise in our cities, and – critically – would substantially mitigate the risks of injury to officers called upon to enforce our traffic laws.

While we do advocate for more technological options to improve transportation mobility and protect pedestrians at key intersections, Seattle is also committed to ensuring that we don't acquire data that we then would have to disclose, under the Public Records Act, to other entities who could use it for purposes unrelated to traffic safety. For this reason, should state privacy protections for this information change, current City leaders are committed to revisiting whether we should maintain an automated block the box enforcement program.

Our streets need to work for all their users, and this requires pedestrian crosswalks be safe and free from obstruction. That is why we urge your support on automated traffic enforcement cameras.

Sincerely,

